

THE  
**CHRISTIAN REFORMER,**  
OR  
**Evangelical Miscellany.**

*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.* PAUL.

**VOL. I. HARRISBURG, JANUARY 1, 1829. No 6.**

**ESSAY III.**

**ON THE SUPPOSED TWO NATURES IN CHRIST.**

(Concluded.)

BUT, perhaps, some will exclaim, what avails all this reasoning about the two natures of Jesus Christ? Is it, or is it not, the doctrine of the Scriptures? In reply, it is observed, that it is because we believe it is *not* a doctrine of the scriptures, that we have appealed to reason. Indeed, it is not alleged by the advocates of the doctrine, that it is any where *expressly* stated in the sacred writings, in the form in which it is received by them. It is admitted, that nothing is *directly* said of the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ, *It is entirely a matter of inference*, that such a union exists. This, we consider, as very unfortunate for the hypothesis. It throws no small degree of suspicion over it. It might have been expected, that a doctrine of so extraordinary a nature would have been stated in the *most plain* and *explicit* language. One would have supposed that it would have been a topic, on which our Lord would have been careful to have instructed his disciples in the fullest manner. This would seem necessary, in order to prevent misconception or doubt, on a subject confessedly obscure, and surrounded with numerous difficulties. When we reflect on this circumstance, and consider that *not a single passage occurs in the whole New Testament, which contains any thing like a direct allusion to the doctrine of two natures*, as admitted by Trinitarians, the omission appears very extraordinary. We say more, it seems utterly incapable of

being accounted for. The doctrine, if true, is certainly an important one, and of a nature it might be thought, which required that it should be taught with the greatest distinctness. *Why then this silence upon the subject*, on the part of our Saviour and his apostles? Why is it, that no direct trace, no incidental notice of it, is found in any expressions which dropped from their lips? Why are we left to find it out *by a laboured process of reasoning*? It surely affords very strong presumption against the doctrine, that nothing approaching to a *direct statement* of it occurs in any part of the New Testament.

I might here dismiss the subject, but as the advocates of the *two natures* in Christ, adduce some passages of scripture in support of this *imaginary opinion*, it may be proper, briefly to notice them. Hereafter should it be necessary, they shall be noticed more at large. The first text we shall introduce, and one that is most frequently quoted by Trinitarians is John 1. 14. "*And the Word was made flesh.*" Now if this text prove any thing, in relation to this subject, it proves too much; it proves that the second Person in the Trinity was actually converted into flesh: or, if by *flesh*, they understand *man* or *human nature*, it will then prove that he *ceased* to be God and *became* man. For the text says, that "the Word was made flesh." I know how Trinitarians explain this passage. They say, that the Word, the second person in the Trinity assumed human nature into union with himself. But mark reader, there is nothing said about *nature*, nor about *assuming it*, but simply, that the Word *was made flesh*. If our translation of this passage be correct, then, it will necessarily follow, that the second person in the Trinity *ceased to be so*, and *was made flesh* or a man. Thus only *one* nature is left, and that nature *a man*, according to the Unitarian belief. How different to this is the Unitarian explanation of this text. "The Word *was* flesh," for this translation is most agreeable to the original, and not *became* or *was made* flesh, as it is in the common version. The same word rendered *made* in this verse, is rendered *was* by our translation in verse 6. Upon this rendering, the meaning of this passage is plain. The word *was flesh*, or *a man*, subject to all the innocent infirmities and mortality of his species. See Psalm 65. 2. Rom. 3. 20. Where the word *flesh* is put for *man*.

The following texts are also quoted in support of the

~~supposed~~ doctrine of *two natures in Christ*. Acts 2. 30. "That of the fruit of his loins, *according to the flesh*, he would raise up Christ." Rom. 9. 5. "Whose are the fathers, and of whom, *as concerning the flesh*, Christ came." Rom. 1. 3. "Made of the seed of David, *according to the flesh*." Our opponents by the phrase *according to the flesh*, understand *according to human nature*, and would infer from it, that Jesus Christ had another and a *divine nature*. But this inference would prove too much; for it would prove that Abraham and the Jews in general had *two natures*, as will appear from the following texts. In Rom. 4. 1. we read of "Abraham our Father *as pertaining* (or *according*) *to the flesh*." Rom. 9. 3. Paul speaking of the Jews says, they were his "kinsmen *according to the flesh*." And in 1 Cor. 10. 18. we are told of "Israel *after* (or, *according*) *to the flesh*." The Greek words KATA SARKA occur in all these quotations, and have the same meaning in each; which is simply this, that Jesus Christ was of the seed of David *by natural descent*, just as the Jews were Paul's kinsmen by *natural descent* from the Fathers. If more is made of this expression in relation to Christ, it will irresistibly follow, that more ought to be made of it in relation to the Jews. If the expression, when applied to Christ proves that he had *two natures*, it will also prove that the Jews had *two natures*. And thus this Trinitarian argument destroys itself.

The only other passage I shall notice is Heb. 2. 16. "For verily he took not on him *the nature* of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." In the rendering of this text, the translators of the common version appear to have acted under the influence of system, or they never could have translated it as they have done. There is nothing whatever, in the Greek text to correspond with the word NATURE introduced here. The *true* rendering they have placed in the margin, for what reason, it is not difficult to divine. It is thus. "*He taketh not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham he taketh hold.*" This translation, or nearly, is adopted by Drs. Macknight and Doddridge, two modern trinitarian writers. Thus rendered, the passage has no allusion either to *two natures* or one; but simply states a most delightful truth, that Christ did not come to help or save angels, for they needed it not, but the seed of Abraham.

I shall here gratify my readers with a quotation on the

subject of this essay, from the writings of the celebrated *Rammohun Roy*, a learned Brahmin of Hindoostan, lately converted from Paganism to the purest form of Christianity. "Before concluding, I beg to revert to one or two arguments respecting the *nature* of Jesus Christ. It is maintained that his nature was double, being divine as Son of God, and human as Son of man—that in the former capacity he performed miracles and exercised authority over the wind and the sea, and as man was subject to human feelings, joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain. Is it possible to consider a being in the human shape, acting daily in a manner required by the nature of the human race, as the invisible God, above mortality and all the feelings of mortal being, from a mere figurative application of the terms "Son of God," or God, to him, and from the circumstance of his performing wonderful works contrary to the usual course of nature? If so, what can prevent us from esteeming Moses and others, as possessed of both *divine* and *human* nature? since Moses likewise is called God distinctly. (Exod. 7. 1.) "I have made thee a God to Pharaoh;" and he is also called man, "wherewith Moses the man of God, blessed Israel." (Deut. 33. 1.) And consequently it may be alleged, that in his divine capacity, Moses performed miracles, and commanded the heavens and the earth. "Give ear, O ye heavens and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth." "For it (the word of Moses) is not a vain thing for you, because *it is your life*; (Deut. 32. 1, 47.) and that in his human capacity, he suffered death."

"Neither Jesus nor Moses ever declared, "I say so, and perform this as God; and I say so, and perform that as man." If we give so great a latitude to the modes of reasoning employed to justify the idea of one being possessed of two sorts of consciousness, as God and man; two sorts of minds, divine and human; and two sets of souls, eternal and perishable; then we shall not only be at a loss to know what is rational and what is absurd, but shall find our senses and experience of very little use. The mode of interpreting the scriptures which is universally adopted, is this, that when two terms seemingly contradictory are applied to one person, then that which is most consistent with reason and with the context, should be taken in a literal, and the other in a figurative sense. Thus God is said to be immaterial, and yet to have hands, eyes, &c.

The latter expressions taken literally, being inconsistent with reason, and with other passages of the Scriptures, are understood as metaphorically implying his power and knowledge, while the former is interpreted in its strict and literal sense: in like manner the terms "Lord, God, &c." applied to any other than the Supreme Being (the Father) must be figuratively understood. Were any one, in defiance of this general mode of interpretation, to insist that the term "God," applied to Jesus, should be taken in its *literal sense*, and that consequently Jesus should be actually considered God in the human shape, he would not only acknowledge the same intimate connexion of matter with God, that exists between matter and the human soul; but also would necessarily justify the application of such phrases as "Mother of God" to the Virgin Mary, and "Brother of God" to James and others; which is highly derogatory to the character of the Supreme Author of the Universe: and it is the use of phrases similar to these, which has rendered the religion of the Hindoos so grossly absurd and contemptible. To admit that all things, whether possible or impossible to our understanding, are possible for God, is certainly favourable to the idea of a mixed nature of God and man; but at the same time would be highly detrimental both to religion and society. For all sorts of positions and tales, however impossible they may be, might in that case be advanced and supported on the same plea." *Rammohun Roy's Second Appeal in Defence of the Precepts of Jesus.* p. 252, 253.

This learned convert from Paganism to Christianity concludes his elaborate publication in the following words, which seriously demand the attention of every Trinitarian. "If Christianity inculcated a doctrine which represents God as consisting of three persons, and appearing sometimes in the human form, at other times in a bodily shape like a dove, no Hindoo, in my humble opinion, who searches after truth, *can conscientiously profess it in preference to Hindooism*; for that which renders the modern Hindoo system of religion absurd and detestable, is, that it represents the divine nature, though *one*, as consisting of many persons, capable of assuming different forms for the discharge of different offices. I am, however, most firmly convinced, that christianity is entirely free from every trace of Polytheism, whether gross or refined. I therefore enjoy the approbation of my conscience in publishing the

Precepts of this religion as the source of peace and happiness."

From the whole we conclude, that the doctrine of *two natures in Christ*, one divine, the other human, *cannot be received*;

1. Because it is not taught plainly in any text of sacred Scripture. §

2. Because it involves the contradiction, that the *same identical person*, is both infinite and finite;—Omniscient and ignorant;—Omnipotent and weak;—Omnipresent and *confined* in a body;—immortal and mortal.

3. Because it necessarily follows from this doctrine, that Christ is *two persons*, which would invalidate the whole Scripture testimony respecting him, which invariably represents him as **ONE, SINGLE, CONSCIOUS INDIVIDUAL.**

4. Because, if we resort to the mode of reasoning which is used to support this doctrine, we can at any time support the opposite and contrary sides of a proposition; and thus we should have no means left to determine what truth is.

5. Because it can never be maintained without destroying the moral character of our Lord, in as much as it necessarily leads its advocates to assert, that he *both knew and did not know* the day of judgment

6. Because if this doctrine be true, "*Jesus was not made in all things like unto his brethren*," for they have only *one* nature. See Heb. 2. 16.

7. Because the doctrine of two natures in Christ, diminishes the *suitableness of his example*. A being who had a *proper divine nature*, could not be affected by temptations, difficulties, and afflictions, as we are.

8. Because it weakens the evidence of our resurrection. His divine nature might reclaim him from the grave, but we have no divine nature to reclaim us.

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§ It would be easy to bring more *direct proof* from the New Testament, that *all believers* possess a *divine nature*, than can be brought in favour of Christ's having a *divine nature*. If any one doubt this, let him read the following text, and then let him search for a text equally direct in support of the supposed *divine nature* of Christ. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of *the divine nature*, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." II. Peter, 1. 4.

Finally, in the words of a spirited modern writer,—  
 “This doctrine of two natures in Christ, fails of any good effects where its aid is most needed by its advocates; in other quarters it is active and desolating; it *renders useless all rules of interpretation*, and makes the *language of Christ ambiguous and contradictory*. It represents him as speaking in two characters, sometimes as God, sometimes as man, without intimating in which character. Pursue this notion to its consequences; as man he might be mistaken like other men; he has in no single instance given a hint by which we can be certain in which character he spoke, but he uniformly acted and conversed as *one being*, possessed of *one nature*, and sustaining *one* character. By what rule shall we judge? One reads his words, and says it is God that speaks; another says it is man. Who shall decide? Or how shall it be proved that he did not utter the language, and speak with the wisdom of man only, when he published the doctrine of a future state, or any other of the doctrines of revelation. Do you say, that the divine nature always controlled the human in these cases? How do you know? You can only decide by your arbitrary opinion, and every man may do the same. That is, no other rule appears than the fancy, caprice, and prejudice of man. In short, this doctrine of the double nature of Christ *introduces uncertainty and confusion* into the whole scheme of revelation; it leaves no *safe ground* for the humble christian to stand upon; it carries destruction equally to the moral precepts, and revealed doctrines of the gospel.”

PHILANTHROPOS.



## A DISCOURSE.

By Dr. W. E. CHANNING.

(Concluded.) from page 108

I have endeavoured to show the great purpose of the christian doctrine respecting God, or in what its importance and glory consist. Had I time, I might show, that

every other doctrine of our religion has the same end. I might particularly show how wonderfully fitted are the character, example, life, death, resurrection, and all the offices of Christ, to cleanse the mind from moral evil, to quicken, soften, elevate, and transform it into the divine image; and I might show that these are the influences which true faith derives from him, and through which he works out our salvation. But I cannot enter on this fruitful subject. Let me only say, that I see every where in Christianity, this great design of liberating and raising the human mind, on which I have enlarged. I see in Christianity nothing narrowing or depressing, nothing of the littleness of the systems which human fear, and craft, and ambition, have engendered. I meet there no minute legislation, no descending to precise details, no arbitrary injunctions, no yoke of ceremonies, no outward religion. Every thing breathes freedom, liberality, enlargement. I meet there, not a formal, rigid creed, binding on the intellect, through all ages, the mechanical, passive repetition of the same words, the same ideas; but I meet a few grand, all comprehending truths, which are given to the soul, to be developed and applied by itself; given to it, as seed to the sower, to be cherished and expanded, by its own thought, love, and obedience, into more and more glorious fruits of wisdom and virtue. I see it every where inculcating an enlarged spirit of piety and philanthropy, leaving each of us to manifest this spirit according to the monitions of his individual conscience. I hear it every where calling the soul to freedom and power, by calling it to guard against the senses, the passions, the appetites, through which it is chained, enfeebled, destroyed. I see it every where aiming to give the mind power over the outward world, to make it superior to events, to suffering, to material nature, to persecution, to death. I see it every where aiming to give the mind power over itself, to invest it with inward sovereignty, to call forth within us a mighty energy for our own elevation. I meet in Christianity only discoveries of a vast, bold, illimitable character, fitted and designed to give energy and expansion to the soul. By its doctrine of a Universal Father, it sweeps away all the barriers of sect, party, rank, and nation, in which men have labored to shut up their love; makes us members of an unbounded family; and establishes sympathies between man and the whole intelligent creation. In

the character of Christ, it sets before us *moral perfection*, that greatest and most quickening miracle in human history, a purity, which shows no stain or touch of the earth, an excellence unborrowed, unconfined, bearing no impress of any age or any nation, the very image of the Universal Father; and it encourages us, by assurances of God's merciful aid, to propose this enlarged, unsullied virtue, as the model and happiness of our moral nature. By the cross of Christ, it sets forth the spirit of self-sacrifice with an energy never known before, and, in thus crucifying selfishness, frees the mind from its worst chain. By Christ's resurrection, it links this short life with eternity, discovers to us in the fleeting present, the germ of an endless future, reveals to us the human mind ascending to other worlds, breathing a freer air, forming higher connexions, and summons us to a force of holy purpose becoming such a destination. To conclude, Christianity every where sets before us God in the character of infinitely free, rich, boundless Grace, in a clemency which is "not overcome by evil, but overcomes evil with good;" and a more animating and ennobling truth, who of us can conceive? I have hardly glanced at what Christianity contains. But who does not see that it was sent from heaven, to call forth, and exalt human nature, and that this is its great glory?

It has been my object in this discourse to lay open a great truth, a central, all comprehending truth of Christianity. Whoever intelligently and cordially embraces it, obtains a standard by which to try all other doctrines and to measure the importance of all other truths. Is it so embraced? I fear not. I apprehend that it is dimly discerned by many who acknowledge it, whilst on many more it has hardly dawned. I see other views prevailing, and prevailing in a greater or less degree among all bodies of Christians, and they seem to me among the worst errors of our times. Some of these I would now briefly notice.

There are those, who, instead of placing the glory of Christianity in the pure and powerful action which it gives to the human mind, seem to think, that it is rather designed to substitute the activity of another for our own. They imagine the benefit of the religion to be, that it enlists on our side an almighty being who does every thing for us. To disparage human agency, seems to them the essence of piety. They think Christ's glory to consist, not in quickening free agents to act powerfully on them-

selves, but in changing them by an irresistible energy. They place a Christian's happiness, not so much in powers and affections unfolded in his own breast, as in a foreign care extended over him, in a foreign wisdom which takes the place of his own intelligence. Now the great purpose of Christianity is, not to procure or offer to the mind a friend on whom it may passively lean, but to make the mind itself wise, strong, and efficient. Its end is, not that wisdom and strength, as subsisting in another, should do every thing for us, but that these attributes should grow perpetually in our own souls. According to Christianity, we are not carried forward as a weight, by a foreign agency; but God, by means suited to our moral nature, quickens and strengthens us to walk ourselves. The great design of Christianity is to build up in our own souls a power to withstand, to endure, to triumph. Inward vigor is its aim. That we should do most for ourselves, and most for others, this is the glory it confers, and in this its happiness is found.

2. I pass to another illustration of the insensibility of men to the great doctrine, that the happiness and glory of Christianity consist in the healthy and lofty frame to which it raises the mind. I refer to the propensity of multitudes to make a wide separation between religion, or christian virtue, and its rewards. That the chief reward lies in the very spirit of religion, they do not dream. They think of being Christians for the sake of something beyond this christian character, and something more precious. They think that Christ has a greater good to give, than a strong and generous love towards God and mankind; and would almost turn from him with scorn, if they thought him only a benefactor to the mind. It is this low view, which dwarfs the piety of thousands. Multitudes are serving God for wages distinct from the service, and hence superstition, slavishness, and formality are substituted for inward energy and spiritual worship.

3. Men's ignorance of the great truth stated in this discourse, is seen in the low ideas attached by multitudes to the word, *salvation*. Ask multitudes, what is the chief evil from which Christ came to save them, and they will tell you, "from hell, from penal fires, from future punishment." Accordingly they think, that salvation is something which another may achieve for them, very much as a neighbour may quench a conflagration that menaces

their dwellings and lives. That word *hell*, which is used so seldom in the sacred pages, which, as critics will tell you, does not occur once in the writings of Paul, and Peter, and John, which we meet only in four or five discourses of Jesus, and which all persons, acquainted with Jewish geography, know to be a metaphor, a figure of speech, and not a literal expression, this word, by a perverse and exaggerated use, has done unspeakable injury to Christianity. It has possessed and diseased men's imaginations with outward tortures, shrieks, and flames; given them the idea of an outward ruin as what they have chiefly to dread; turned their thoughts to Jesus, as an outward deliverer; and thus blinded them to his true glory, which consists in his setting free and exalting the soul. Men are flying from an outward hell, when in truth they carry within them the hell which they should chiefly dread. The salvation which man chiefly needs, and that which brings with it all other deliverance, is salvation from the evil of his own mind. There is something far worse than outward punishment. It is sin; it is the state of a soul, which has revolted from God, and cast off its allegiance to conscience and the divine word; which renounces its Father, and hardens itself against Infinite Love; which, endued with divine powers, enthrals itself to animal lusts; which makes gain its god; which has capacities of boundless and ever growing love, and shuts itself up in the dungeon of private interests; which, gifted with a self-directing power, consents to be a slave, and is passively formed by custom, opinion, and changing events; which, living under God's eye, dreads man's frown or scorn, and prefers human praise to its own calm consciousness of virtue; which tamely yields to temptation, shrinks with a coward's baseness from the perils of duty, and sacrifices its glory and peace in parting with self control. No ruin can be compared to this. This the impenitent man carries with him beyond the grave, and there meets its natural issue, and inevitable retribution, in remorse, self-torture, and woes unknown on earth. This we cannot too strongly fear. *To save*, in the highest sense of that word, is to lift the fallen spirit from this depth, to heal the diseased mind, to restore it to energy and freedom of thought, conscience, and love. This was chiefly the salvation for which Christ shed his blood. For this the holy spirit is given; and to this all the truths of Christianity conspire.

4. Another illustration of the error which I am laboring to expose, and which places the glory and importance of Christianity in something besides its quickening influence on the soul, is afforded in the common apprehensions formed of heaven, and of the methods by which it may be obtained. Not a few, I suspect, conceive of heaven as a foreign good. It is a distant country, to which we are to be conveyed by an outward agency. How slowly do men learn, that heaven is the perfection of the mind, and that Christ gives it now just as far as he raises the mind to celestial truth and virtue. It is true, that this word is often used to express a future felicity; but the blessedness of the future world is only a continuance of what is begun here. There is but one true happiness, that of mind unfolding its best powers, and attaching itself to great objects; and Christ gives heaven, only in proportion as he gives this elevation of character. The disinterestedness, and moral strength, and filial piety of the Christian, are not mere means of heaven, but heaven itself, and heaven now.

The most exalted idea we can form of the future state, is, that it brings and joins us to God. But is not approach to this great being begun on earth? Another delightful view of heaven, is, that it unites us with the good and great of our own race, and even with higher orders of beings. But this union is one of spirit, not of mere place; it is accordance of thought and feeling, not an outward relation; and does not this harmony begin even now? and is not virtuous friendship on earth essentially the pleasure which we hope hereafter? What place would be drearier than the future mansions of Christ, to one who should want sympathy with their inhabitants, who could not understand their language, who would feel himself a foreigner there, who would be taught, by the joys which he could not partake, his own loneliness and desolation? These views, I know, are often given with greater or less distinctness; but they seem to me not to have brought home to men the truth, that the fountain of happiness must be in our own souls. Gross ideas of futurity still prevail. I should not be surprised if to some among us the chief idea of heaven were that of a splendor, a radiance, like that which Christ wore on the Mount of Transfiguration. Let us all consider, and it is a great truth, that heaven has no lustre surpassing that of intel-

lectual and moral worth; and that, were the effulgence of the sun and stars concentrated in the Christian, even this would be darkness, compared with the pure beamings of wisdom, love, and power from his mind. Think not then that Christ has come to give heaven as something distinct from virtue. Heaven is the freed and sanctified mind, enjoying God through accordance with his attributes, multiplying its bonds and sympathies with excellent beings, putting forth noble powers, and ministering, in union with the enlightened and holy, to the happiness and virtue of the universe.

My friends, I fear I have been guilty of repetition. But I feel the greatness of the truth which I deliver, and I am anxious to make it plain. Men need to be taught it perpetually. They have always been inclined to look to Christ for something better, as they have dreamed, than the elevation of their own souls. The great purpose of Christianity to unfold and strengthen and lift up the mind, has been perpetually thrown out of sight. In truth, this purpose has been more than overlooked. It has been reversed. The very religion, given to exalt human nature, has been used to make it abject. The very religion which was given to create a generous hope, has been made an instrument of servile and torturing fear. The very religion, which came from God's goodness to enlarge the human soul with a kindred goodness, has been employed to narrow it to a sect, to rear the Inquisition, and to kindle fires for the martyr. The very religion, given to make the understanding and conscience free, has, by a criminal perversion, served to break them into subjection to priests, ministers, and human creeds. Ambition and craft have seized on the solemn doctrines of an omnipotent God and of future punishment, and turned them into engines against the child, the trembling female, the ignorant adult, until the sceptic has been emboldened to charge on religion the chief miseries and degradation of human nature. It is from a deep and sorrowful conviction of the injuries inflicted on Christianity and on the human soul, by these perversions and errors, that I have reiterated the great truth of this discourse. I would rescue our holy faith from this dishonor. Christianity has no tendency to break the human spirit, or to make man a slave. It has another aim; and as far as it is understood, it puts forth another power. God sent it from heaven, Christ sealed it

with his blood, that it might give force of thought and purpose to the human mind, might free it from all fear but the fear of wrong doing, might make it free of its fellow beings, might break from it every outward and inward chain.

My hearers, I close with exhorting you to remember this great purpose of our religion. Receive Christianity as given to raise you in the scale of spiritual being. Expect from it no good any further than it gives strength and worth to your characters. Think not, as some seem to think, that Christ has a higher gift than purity to bestow, even pardon to the sinner. He does bring pardon. But once separate the idea of pardon from purity; once imagine that forgiveness is possible to him who does not forsake sin; once make it an exemption from outward punishment, and not the admission of the reformed mind to favor and communion with God; and the doctrine of pardon becomes your peril, and a system, so teaching it, is fraught with evil. Expect no good from Christ any farther than you are exalted by his character and teaching. Expect nothing from his cross, unless a power comes from it, strengthening you to "bear his cross," to "drink his cup," with his own unconquerable love. This is its highest influence. Look not abroad for the blessings of Christ. His reign and chief blessings are within you. The human soul is his kingdom. There he gains his victories, there rears his temples, there lavishes his treasures. His noblest monument is a mind, redeemed from iniquity, brought back and devoted to God, forming itself after the perfection of the Saviour, great through its power to suffer for truth, lovely through its meek and gentle virtues. No other monument does Christ desire; for this will endure and increase in splendor, when earthly thrones shall have fallen, and even when the present order of the outward universe shall have accomplished its work, and shall have passed away.

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## ON PERSECUTION.

*A Dialogue.*

*Thomas.* Good evening neighbour Richard, I hope you are well.

*Richard.* Very well, I thank you. I am glad to see you. Take a seat, and let us have a little conversation.

*Thom.* With all my heart. Shall we resume the subject to which you referred, at the close of our last conversation?

*Rich.* It is what I particularly wish.

*Thom.* The subject, you asked my opinion of, at our last meeting, was *persecution*. Before I offer any thoughts on this subject, it will be necessary to ascertain the meaning of the term. Some use this word in so restricted a sense, as to apply it only to those acts which deprive a person of liberty or life, on account of his religious opinions. But by *persecution* I understand, *every unkind word or action to others on account of their differing from us in religious opinions or practices*. If this definition be just, and I apprehend it is, then it will follow, that persecution *as certainly exists now* among Christians, as it did two or three centuries ago, or in the darkest ages of the history of the church, differing only in degree. Are you prepared to go thus far in your views of this subject, neighbour Richard?

*Rich.* I am. And taken in this extended sense, I am afraid it has existed too generally among Christians.

*Thom.* It has, and there is nothing that has brought more disgrace on the holy profession of christianity. On this ground, the infidel has rejected, and the pagan has despised it. Whilst Christians were humble—meek—and candid;—whilst their ministers imitated Paul and his associates, who did not profess “*to have dominion over the faith of their brethren, but were helpers of their joy;*” (2. Cor. 1. 24.)—whilst they were more concerned to promote the welfare of their flocks, than their own interest and aggrandizement;—whilst they were content to receive christianity from the writings of the Apostles and Evangelists, without attempting to establish any formula of their own; *Persecution was unknown between*

*Christian and Christian.* They had a warm and mutual affection for each other;—they delighted in reciprocal acts of kindness;—and sought every opportunity of holding communion and fellowship together. So conspicuous were the first Christians, for these amiable traits of character, that the common observation of their pagan neighbours, was, “*behold how these Christians love!*” It is true, that in these days of primitive simplicity, the disciples did not all think alike on all subjects that were taught in the scriptures; but this difference of opinion, made no difference in their personal regards, or in their conduct to each other. For, they recollected, that even the apostles themselves differed on some subjects: yet this difference did not lead the apostles to hate and excommunicate one another. But so soon as men began to think that Christianity, as it is exhibited in the New Testament, *was too simple*; that it required the aid of human learning and philosophy to *systemize* it, and to present it in a more connected form, to the mass of mankind; then up sprang the first *creeds and confessions of faith*, which were the original source of persecution, and have continued to nourish and foster this demon of cruelty to the present day.

*Rich.* Do you then suppose that *creeds and confessions of faith*, are the *cause of persecution in the Church of God*? We have been accustomed to venerate these formulas as the standards of our faith, and as the best means of securing uniformity in the church. But if I were convinced that persecution takes its rise from, and is supported by *creeds and confessions of faith*, I would forthwith relinquish them, as the scourge of the church of God, and the curse of mankind.

*Thom.* It will not be difficult, I think, to convince you, who are a candid and impartial man, *that persecution is the immediate and direct offspring of creeds and confessions of faith*. It is true, that before men attempted to form a creed or confession of faith, they must have departed in some degree, from the holy and humble spirit of the first christians;—they must have become dissatisfied with the scriptures, as *a perfect standard of faith and practice*;—and must have imagined that they could *extract from them*, a system of religious doctrines and practices, more adapted to the circumstances and wants of mankind, than what they found there *in its present form*: that is, *in that form in which God chose*

*to communicate his will to the human family.* Some such departure from the spirit of christianity, must have given the first idea of a confession of faith. But when it was formed, instead of uniting Christians together, as these vain dreamers imagined, it separated them further asunder;—instead of promoting uniformity in all the churches of Christ, it split them into a thousand parties, under as many leaders;—and instead of promoting brotherly love and affection, it produced pride, censoriousness, hatred and persecution. This is not an imaginary picture, friend Richard; it is an actual statement of facts. And if you investigate the essence and design of a *human creed* you will see, that *these effects will necessarily be the result of it*; unless men cease to act like men, and yield up their consciences to the complete controul of the priesthood. That you may see and feel the truth of these remarks, permit me to ask you a few questions.

*Rich.* With cheerfulness. For I begin to love the truth for its own sake, and shall be happy to find her any where. I have no longer any fears of being interrogated. Ask me what questions you please.

*Thom.* What then is a creed or confession of faith?

*Rich.* It is a *systematic statement* of the doctrines and duties, *supposed* to be contained in the Scriptures.

*Thom.* By whom is it made; by inspired or uninspired men—by fallible or infallible men?

*Rich.* By *fallible and uninspired men*, certainly.

*Thom.* If made by *fallible and uninspired men*, then it possesses no force—no authority whatever, over the conscience; for it contains the opinions of these fallible men, and no more; and it may therefore be rejected with impunity, and without losing our respect and reverence for the sacred Scriptures, in the least.

*Rich.* Certainly. This liberty ought to be granted. For no fallible man, or *body of fallible men*, ought to make a creed, and then insist upon every man believing it.

*Thom.* But dont you perceive friend Richard, that though the makers of confessions of faith, *acknowledge that they are fallible*; they nevertheless act towards those who reject them, *as if they were infallible*?

*Rich.* I am not aware of this, at present. It does not strike me, that the framers and friends of creeds, act as if they were infallible.

*Thom.* Though this does not strike you to be the case at present; yet such is the honesty and candour of your mind, that I have no doubt I shall succeed in convincing you, that this is actually the case.

*Rich.* I am open to conviction, and will hear you without prejudice.

*Thom.* Suppose one of the members of your church, were to acknowledge to his brethren, that he had for some time entertained doubts of the truth of a number of things contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith; but that *now*, he was fully satisfied that the leading doctrines of that creed were antichristian and pernicious; and yet, at the same time, acknowledge his firm believe of the New Testament, and his willingness to be guided, both in faith and practice, by this blessed book;—what would his brethren, the minister and church, say to him,—and how would they act towards him? Would they continue him in the possession of all his privileges as a church-member, and manifest their love to him as before, so long as *his conduct* appeared to be consistent with the spirit and precepts of the New Testament?

*Rich.* I believe not. They would, however, endeavour to convince him that the confession of faith was true, and that *he ought to adhere to it, as he had, heretofore, subscribed it as containing a correct statement of his faith.*

*Thom.* Yes, yes, I dare say they would act thus. The church officers know, full well, the force of this sophistical reasoning, upon weak and timid minds. But surely it does not follow, that because a man *once* believed a proposition, he should therefore, *always believe it*; unless it be admitted, *that our knowledge of truth is perfect at once.* Thus you see, the first step your church would take with such a man, proceeds upon the principle, that the confession of Faith *must be right*, that is, *infallible.* They do not ask him to state what reasons have effected a change upon his mind, assuring him that they will hear them with candour, and examine their force with impartiality, and that if they find them conclusive, they will unite with him in the rejection of the leading doctrines of the confession of faith. No, no; they do not do this, though this they ought to do. But they remind him of what he *believed*, when he was a *young and inexperienced christian*, perhaps too, under the influence of fear; and, therefore, he ought to believe the same *now*. Thus plainly intimating, that he never ought to *know more* than the confession of faith teaches, nor any *thing different from it*, putting an end at once to all inquiry after, and improvement in knowledge. Hence it follows, that a confession of faith is inimical to progress in knowledge, and that it virtually says, to all who dare to subscribe it, "*Hitherto shalt thou go, but no farther.*"

But to proceed. Supposing this member of the church, after having been thus dealt with, should continue to think that *the confession of faith* was opposed to the word of God, in all its leading doctrines; how would they then act towards him?

*Rich.* I believe they would ex-communicate him.

*Thom.* Certainly they would. But does not this prove that they consider the confession of faith, *as an authoritative rule, or as an infallible test of truth.* If they do not consider it in this light, there could be no propriety in putting away a brother from the church, because he did not, or could not believe it. Thus you see, a *mere human composition, written by men who possessed no more authority to make creeds for the church of God, than either you or I, is raised to a level, in point of authority, with the inspired oracles themselves.* And thus it is “that men make void the commandments of God, by their traditions.”

*Rich.* I begin to see that creeds and confessions of faith, are greater evils in the church, than I had any previous idea of; and I fear, that your assertion is but too true, that they are the *cause of persecution.*

*Thom.* That this is the case, will hardly admit of a doubt, if we examine the conduct of the church, to which we have just referred. This man was excommunicated, *not for rejecting the holy scriptures, for he acknowledged his firm and fearless belief in those sacred Oracles; but for rejecting the Confession of faith.* Thus he was deprived of his place in the church,—of a seat at the Lord’s table,—separated from his brethren,—and cast out into the wide world, with a stigma of disgrace upon him; and why?—because he conscientiously rejected *a mere human composition*, for such undoubtedly, is the Westminster Confession of faith. Had there been no creed in this church, but the Scriptures, they could not have cast him out, nor would they ever have thought of such a thing. For if they had asked him whether he believed any particular passage of that book, he would, without hesitation, have answered that he did. Hence we see, that *the confession of faith was the cause* of this man’s separation from the church, and of all the evils that flow to him in consequence of this proceeding. That is in plain language, it led the church *to persecute and injure a brother*, who acknowledged, at the moment of his separation, his firm belief in the Scriptures.

*Rich.* I acknowledge myself convinced. Your argument is complete. *I am satisfied that confessions of faith, of ha-*

*man composition, are the principal, if not the only cause of persecution among christians.*

*Thom.* Yes, and if the person thus ex-communicated, for the rejection of the confession of faith, had lived in days of yore, when men thought they did God service, by burning those who would not believe their fallible, infallible composition; he would have been consigned to a gloomy dungeon, and from thence, to the gibbet or the stake. § As it is, his christian brethren do him all the evil they can—all the evil that the civil power will permit them to do. They put him out of the Church—they cease to hold intercourse with him—they endeavour to ruin his character,—and to injure him in his business. If he be a Storekeeper, they forsake his Store, and endeavour to influence others;—if a Schoolmaster, they take away their children, or refuse to send them;—if a Printer, they give up their papers;—and if a Mechanic, they refuse to employ him. Such are some of the fruits of human confessions of faith. They deprive their adherents of a proper respect for the Scriptures;—they make a Church, a prison,—its Ministers, spiritual tyrants;—and its members, unfeeling and often cruel towards those who conscientiously differ from them in their religious opinions.

*Rich.* But you do not mean to infer, that all who receive and subscribe confessions of faith, act in this manner?

*Thom.* God forbid I should. For in every Church where

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§ If any one should doubt the correctness of these remarks, let him attempt to answer the following questions. Why did the Roman Catholics persecute and burn the Protestants? was it not because they refused to receive the Mass Book?—Why did the Protestants of the Church of England persecute and burn the Puritans and Nonconformists, and some of the Roman Catholics in England and Ireland? Was it not because they rejected the 39 articles and the book of Common Prayer?—Why did the Presbyterians, when they obtained the ascendancy in England and Scotland, persecute the Episcopalians? was it not because they rejected their confession of Faith and Directory?—And why did the Congregationalists in New-England, persecute the Baptists and Quakers? Was it not because they refused to be governed by their Platform &c. as they called their confession of faith?—And to come nearer home, and to our own times, why is it that all sects of christians now, with one or two happy exceptions, persecute and revile one another? Is it not, because each party has a standard or a confession of faith among them, which they deem it their duty to support?

If any one will attempt seriously to answer these questions, I think he will find that there is no other adequate cause of persecution among christians, than a *creed or confession of faith*, formed by *fallible* men, and yet acted-upon as if its authors were *infallible*.

a confession of faith is received, there are many who become members, not because of their love to this formula, but because of their desire to hear the gospel, and join at the Lord's table, and they do not trouble themselves about the particular opinions of the society. But every firm and zealous believer of a confession of faith of human composition, must be a persecutor, in a greater or less degree, from the minister of a country Congregation, to the General Assembly of the Union; for if he firmly believe the confession of faith to be true, he must believe all who reject it to be *heretics*; and all *heretics* must be put out of the Church, by a law of the confession of faith itself, that is, they must be persecuted. For the separation of any one from a christian Church, merely on account of such difference of opinion as exists among christian sects, is in the strictest sense of the word *persecution*. If you wish an instance of this, we need only refer to a recent act of the Synod of Baltimore, which separated Messrs. *Duncan* and *McLean* from their respective Congregations, not for rejecting the doctrine contained in the confession of faith, but for rejecting its authority, as a standard of faith and practice.

*Rich.* I now see clearly, that an authoritative confession of faith, is a very great evil in the Church of God; and most sincerely pray, that all my christian brethren may see it in the same light.

*Thom.* I heartily join you in this prayer, friend Richard; for till this is the case, a persecuting spirit will exist in the very bosom of the Christian Church;—a spirit in direct opposition to every precept of christianity, and to the whole design of that heavenly institution. Christianity can only progress in the world, in proportion as *persecution ceases* among professing christians. For Christianity consists in *love to God and man*; but a persecutor of others, for a difference of religious opinion, cannot sincerely love either God or man, and therefore cannot be a true christian.

What a happy day would it be for the world, if all christians were to return to primitive usages, and rejecting all human authorities in matters of religion, submit to the *only Master JESUS CHRIST*. Then would truth and love abound in the church—her purity and happiness would increase—her borders would be enlarged and she would become the joy and glory of the whole earth!

[THE Editor most affectionately and urgently recommends the following paper on the *Formation of Character* to all his young readers. Should they view it in the light he does, he is confident that the serious and attentive perusal of it, will make an impression, which no time can efface, or any circumstances change.]

## FORMATION OF CHARACTER.

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It is ever to be kept in mind that a *good name* is in all cases the fruit of *personal exertion*. It is not inherited from parents; it is not created by external advantages; it is no necessary appendage of birth, or wealth, or talents, or station; but the result of one's own endeavours—the fruit and reward of good principles, manifested in a course of virtuous and honourable action. This is the more important to be remarked, because it shows that the attainment of a good name, whatever be your external circumstances, is *entirely within your power*. No young man, however humble his birth, or obscure his condition, is excluded from the invaluable boon. He has only to fix his eye upon the prize, and press towards it, in a course of virtuous and useful conduct, and it is his. And it is interesting to notice how many of our worthiest and best citizens have risen to honour and usefulness, by dint of their own persevering exertions. They are to be found in great numbers, in each of the learned professions, and in every department of business, and they stand forth, bright and animating examples of what can be accomplished by resolution and effort. Indeed, my friends, in the formation of character, *personal exertion* is the first, the second, and the third virtue. Nothing great or excellent can be acquired without it. A good name will not come without being sought. All the virtues of which it is composed are the results of untiring application and industry.

Thousands of young men have been ruined by relying for a good name on their honourable parentage, or inherited wealth, or the patronage of friends. Flattered by these distinctions, they have felt as if they might live without effort—merely for their own gratification and indulgence. No mistake is more fatal. It always issues in producing an inefficient and useless character. On this account it is that character and wealth rarely continue in the same family more than two or three generations.

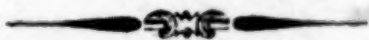
In the foundation of a good character, it is of great importance that *the early part of life be improved and guarded with*

the utmost carefulness. The most critical period of life is that which elapses from fourteen to twenty-one years of age. More is done during this period to mould and settle the character of the future man, than in all the other years of life. If a young man passes this season with pure morals and fair reputation, a good name is almost sure to crown his maturer years, and descend with him to the close of his days. On the other hand, if a young man in this spring season of life, neglect his mind and heart; if he indulges himself in vicious courses, and forms habits of inefficiency and slothfulness, he experiences a loss which no efforts can retrieve, and brings a stain upon his character which no tears can wash away.

Youthful thoughtlessness, I know, is wont to regard the indiscretions and vicious indulgencies of this period, as of very little importance. But, believe me, my friends, they have great influence in forming your future character, and deciding the estimation in which you are to be held in community. They are the germs of bad habits, and bad habits confirmed are ruin to the character and the soul. The errors and vices of a young man, even when they do not ripen into habit, impress a blot on the name, which is rarely effaced. They are remembered in subsequent life; the public eye is often turned back to them: the stigma is seen; it cleaves fast to the character, and its unhappy effects are felt to the end of his days.

A fair reputation, it should be remembered, is "a plant delicate in its nature, and by no means rapid in its growth." A character which it has cost many years to establish, is often destroyed in a single hour, or even a minute. Guard, then, with peculiar vigilance, this forming, fixing season of your existence.

#### HAWES' LECTURES TO YOUNG MEN.



*Dedicatory lines, on the erection of the Unitarian Church,  
corner of 10th and Locust streets, Philadelphia*

This Temple, Lord, we rear to thee,  
And lift the hands and bow the knee,

To supplicate thy grace;

Oh smile upon the good design

The praise—the glory shall be thine

In this thy dwelling place.

If *faith* 'ere built a house for thee,  
 And *hope* with meek ey'd *charity*,  
 In human walks were seen,  
 Here may they fix their bright abode,  
 Till all shall view the blessed *God*  
 Without a cloud between.

Here the blest messenger of grace,  
 To all repentant of our race  
 In prayer shall oft be found;  
 Thy servants too shall bless thy name,  
 And spread the soul inspiring theme  
 Till all thy praise resound.

Here shall the infant tribes appear—  
 Whose innocence is still most dear  
 To thee blest source of love,  
 Thou still wilt bow thy gracious ear  
 To listen to their artless prayer,  
 And hearing wilt approve.

Here shall the mourner comfort find,  
 The drooping and the sin-sick mind,  
 Here cast away their cares—  
 Each suppliant shall lift his hand  
 And thou O Lord wilt notwithstanding  
 Thy peoples' earnest prayers.

Then Lord we dedicate to thee  
 This House—Ourselves—Our property,  
 And *all* thy love supplies;  
 And when we've done thy will *below*,  
 Do thou on every soul, bestow,  
 A mansion in the skies.

J. F. A.

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### CONDITIONS.

I. THE CHRISTIAN REFORMER, intended to promote a spirit of Free Enquiry and the practice of Piety and Virtue, will be published monthly, and contain 12 duodecimo pages—but should the number of subscribers warrant it, it will be increased to 24 pages, in the course of the year, without any additional charge.

II. Price, ONE DOLLAR a year, to be paid in advance. All communications to the Editor must be *post paid*.

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*Printed by G. S. Peters, Harrisburg, Pa.*